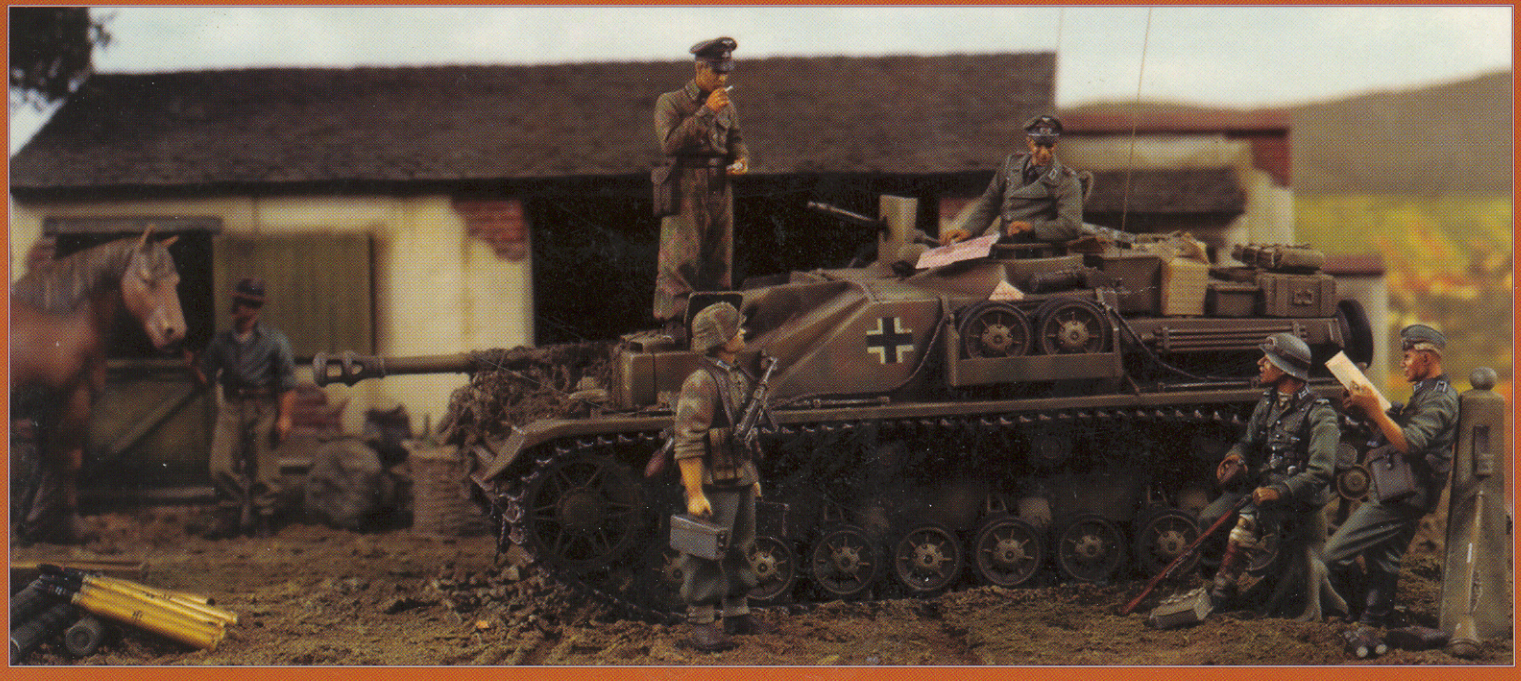
VERLINDEN PUBLICATIONS

Building Military Dioramas Vol.I

Illustrated with over 100 full color Photographs.



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Building Military Dioramas Vol.I

VP
the world in scale

Verlinden Publications

Building diorama bases and groundwork

The base of a diorama can be one of the most important elements in the overall appeal of the display. The selection of materials to make that base is among the more critical decisions when planning a diorama. Virtually any material can be used for a diorama base as long as it is water resistant. Blue extruded polystyrene insulation board, also known as marine styrofoam, is sold in different thicknesses and makes for an excellent material to use as a diorama base. It can easily be cut with a jig saw, sanded, shaped with a soldering iron or hot knife, and painted with water based paints. For larger bases, a good quality plywood edged with picture frame stock works fine, but needs to be sealed with a water resistant primer or varnish to prevent warping. Some of the smaller ready-made bases sold in craft stores work well also. Whatever material you finally decide on for your diorama base, remember that nothing is more unpleasant than a great diorama on a poor base. In this article we hope that we can help to guide you through the maze of tools, materials, and products that will bring you success and satisfaction when you embark on the complicated journey of diorama building.

The tools and materials for basic groundwork: a water-jar, white glue, butter knife, and paintbrush. The basic colors: sand, red-brown, and black (all water based). According to the basic color needed for the groundwork, the paints are mixed with grout cement, in this case Porion, and a little white glue, resulting in a pre-colored paste as a base for the ground material.

Pebbles, gravel, smashed red brick, cat litter, fine sand, and plain old dirt can be used to texture the basic ground of the diorama.

Fine gravel, broken brick sections, VP red & gray tiles, and VP red bricks are some of the basic materials that can be used as ground debris for urban dioramas.

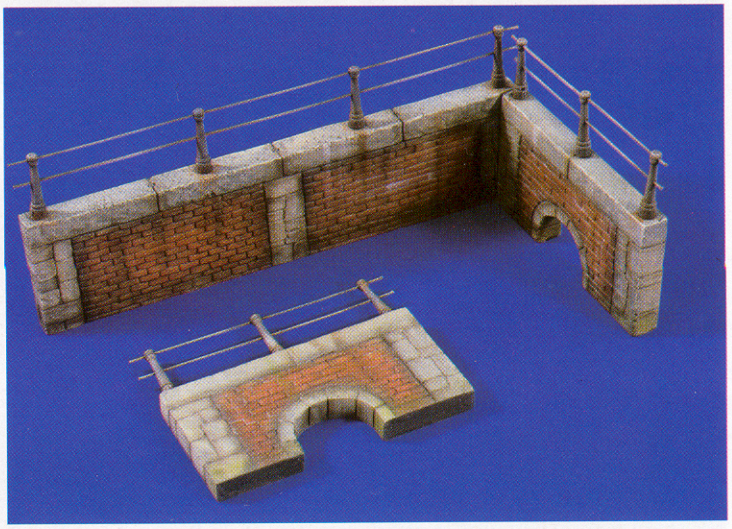
Static grass can always find a use on virtually any diorama. Here is VP's green and brown grass mixed to achieve a toned down green.

Roots from small trees and shrubs make the best miniature trees and bushes. Look around for these outdoors. It can take a while to find the ones that look right, so be patient. Select them carefully and trim them to shape. Look at the grocery store for the best looking dried herbs, which will serve as foliage on the trees. Apply glue to the trees with a spray can, and sprinkle the herbs on while it is still wet. After the glue is dry, the trees can be colored with an airbrush in different shades of green, red, brown, yellow, etc., depending on what season that you wish to depict.

The tropical jungle vegetation shown here is a combination of static grass, roots, aquarium plants, and VP photo-etched palm plants and palm trees. The different varieties of plants are airbrushed with various shades of green and subtly highlighted with drybrushing and pastels.

Right : This ceramic VP ruined building sections set contains very useful parts to fill up an empty corner on a diorama. Combined with cat litter, grainy dirt, miniature bricks, and gravel, these can be built-up into very convincing urban scenes.

After the groundwork has been base-painted and allowed to dry, it has to be drybrushed with water-based colors. Here, a piece of white card has been inserted into a clear poly bag to serve as a mixing palette, and different sized stencilling brushes are used as applicators for drybrushing.

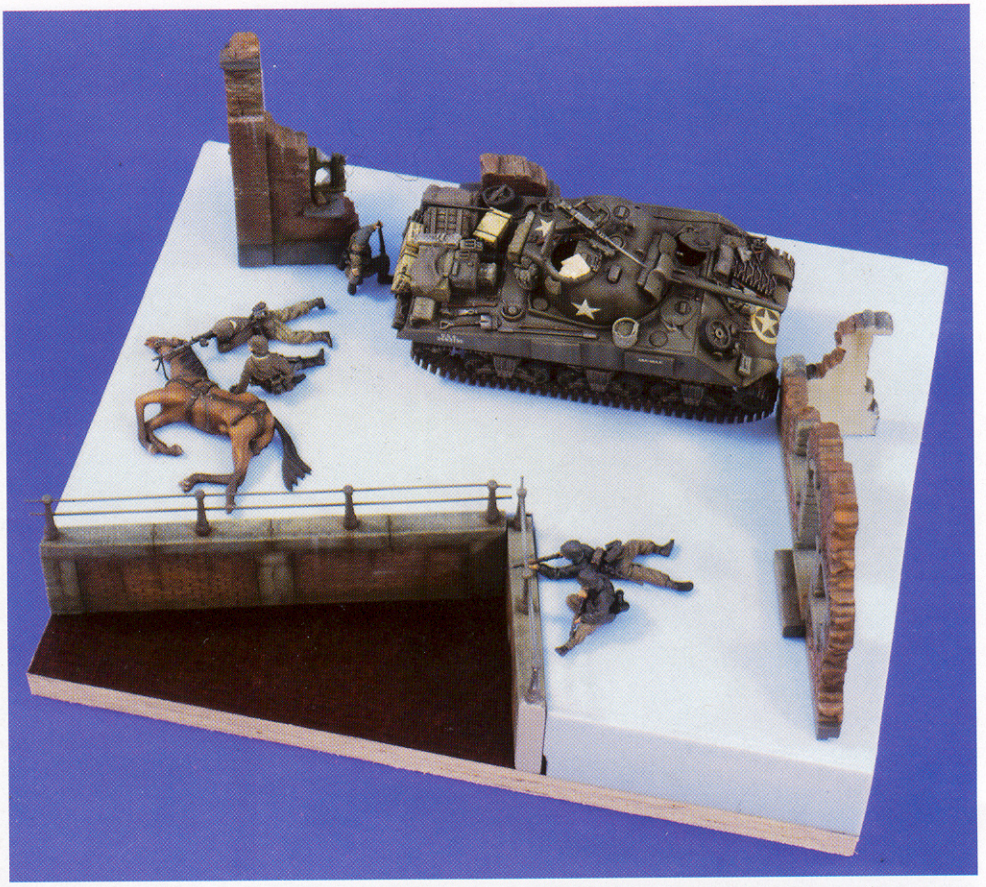


Commercially available ceramic structures like these VP river embankments are painted and weathered using washes and drybrushing before they are built into the scenery.

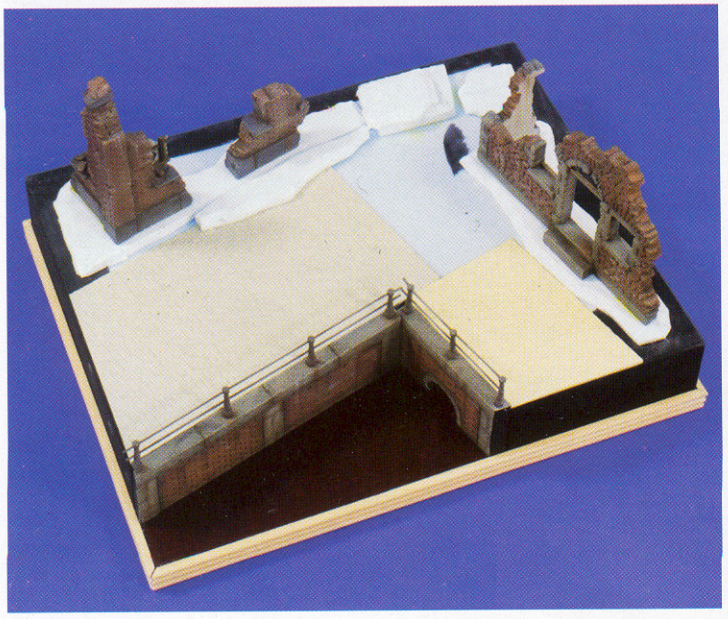
Cornered by VP studios

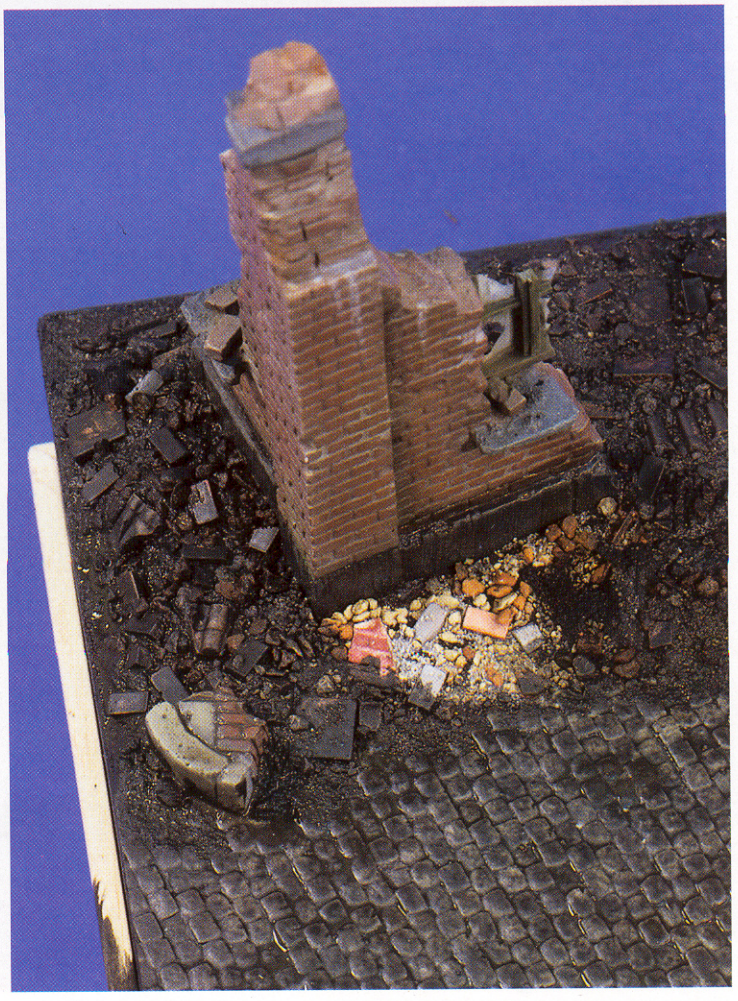
It is 1944, in a town by a river, somewhere in Europe. Liberation is near. U.S. Troops and tanks have moved into the ruined town. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a German counter-attack! A Sherman has gotten itself stuck among the ruins. The crew has bailed out and retreated under heavy fire. SS troops occupy the river embankment. The U.S. Troops respond with artillery and mortar fire, renewing the attack. The German crack-troops have gotten themselves cornered on the embankment, and are refusing to give up without a fierce fight.

Right : The basic layout, determining the positions of the river embankment (VP # 1546), ruined buildings (VP # 1533), tank, and figures. The base was cut to size from marine plywood, which is water-resistant and does not warp. The raised area was cut from marine styrofoam to match the dimensions of the plywood base and the height of the embankment elements.



Below : After indicating with a pencil the location of the ruined buildings, they were glued with white glue onto sections of thinly cut marine styrofoam to raise them slightly above street-level. Sections of resin cobblestone streets (VP #1145) were cut to match and glued in place. The edges of the styrofoam base were painted with Tamiya flat black. The lower part of the edge is strip moulding, still to be painted.

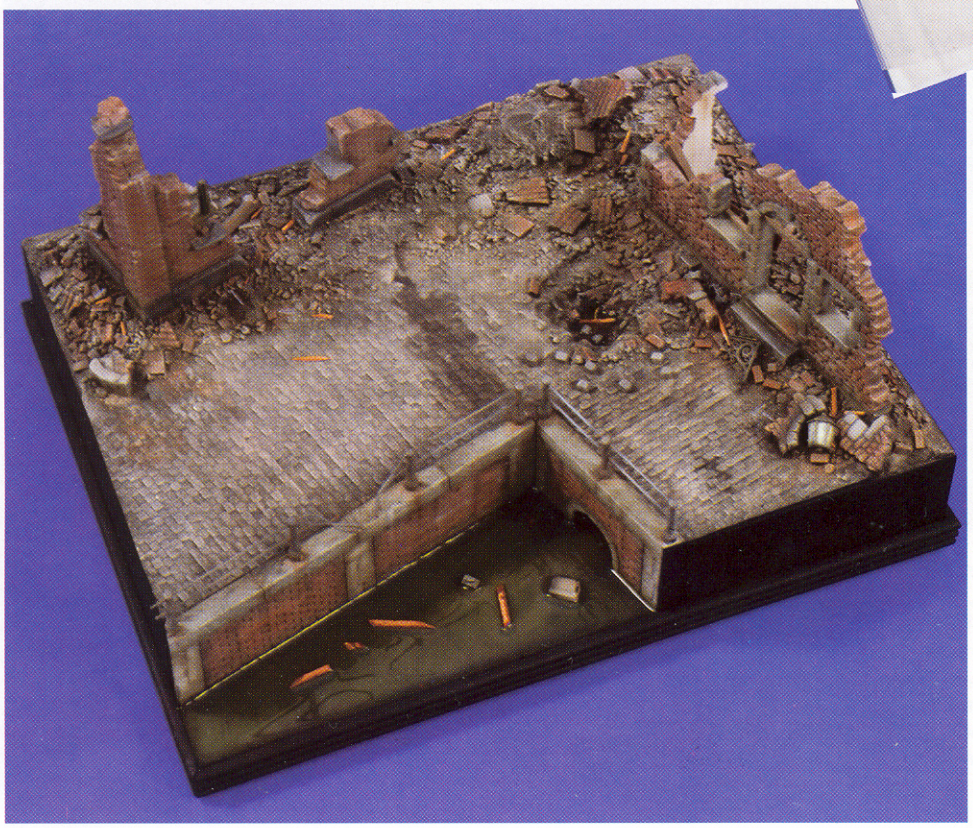




The complete basic base, with buildings and groundwork painted. A small patch of groundwork has been left unpainted to show the difference. Note that the base coat is slightly transparent. The debris is a mixture of cat litter, red bricks (VP # 1447), red and gray tiles (T20034), grainy sand, and crushed bricks & tiles. Base paint mixture: black, sand, and red brown.

Half way through the drybrushing process. Browns and grays are used in different shades, moving gradually lighter and using less pressure on the brush. The final coat of drybrushing is a light cream (light gray and a touch of sand), brushed very gently, just touching the surface.

The palette for drybrushing the groundwork. All drybrush colors are mixed from sand and red-brown, with black and light gray for shading and highlighting.



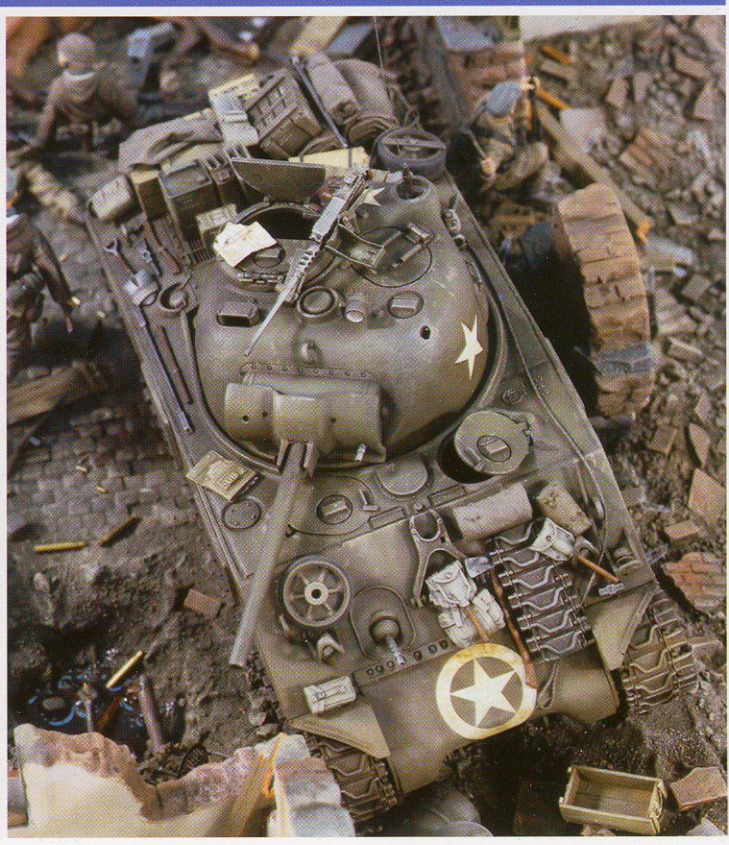
The finished base. The brick parts of the debris have been drybrushed with red-brown, ending with an almost pink. After sufficient drying, various dirty washes of brown and rust were applied, defining details. Adding a little raw umber and burnt sienna oils works well here. Note the oil and fuel spills (dirty black) on the cobblestones and the rust stains on the stonework near the guard-rail posts.

The water was made by first painting the area dark brown/green, with a light olive cloud pattern airbrushed over. After dry, a coat of Envirotex clear resin was poured. A jerrycan, oil can, and wood debris were pushed in, simulating debris floating on the surface.

This overview shows the scene packed with action. The stuck Sherman tank, and the German squad being attacked from multiple directions. A battle scene is always scattered with debris: civilian and military items, spent cartridge cases, fuel drums & cans, ammo cases, etc. Note the water-filled mortar crater next to the tank.

Using a dead horse (a common sight during WWII) as cover, the MG 34 machine gunner fires one round after another, while the squad leader shouts his orders. Note the spent shells, which are small plastic rod painted brass. Also note the various equipment all over the place and the broken guard rail on the embankment. Little details are important.

The back side reveals the mass of debris and it's subtle painting and weathering. All figures and accessories are VP, selected from various sets, painted and weathered. Note the splintered wood beams and shattered glass (clear styrene sheet, cut into tiny pieces).

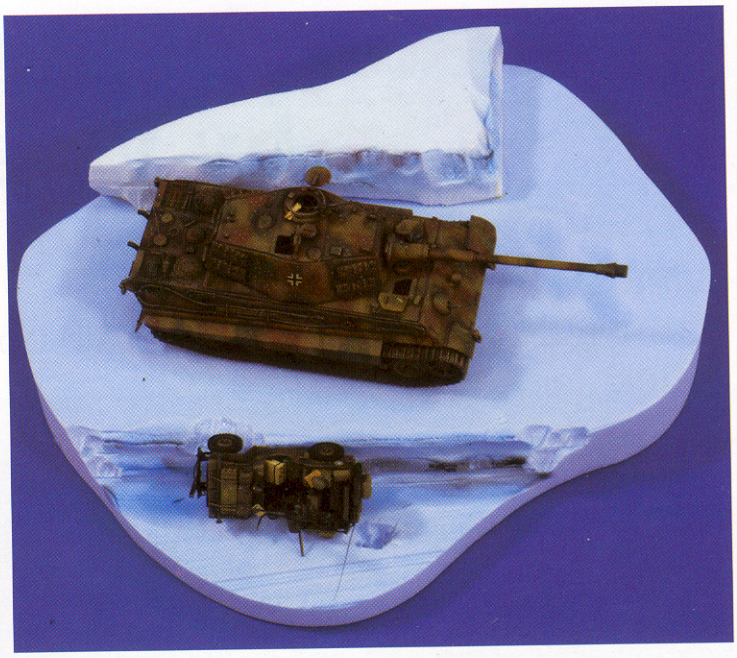


The Sherman is from Tamiya, built out of the box. The only additions are the cal. 50 (VP# 372) and various VP stowage and equipment.

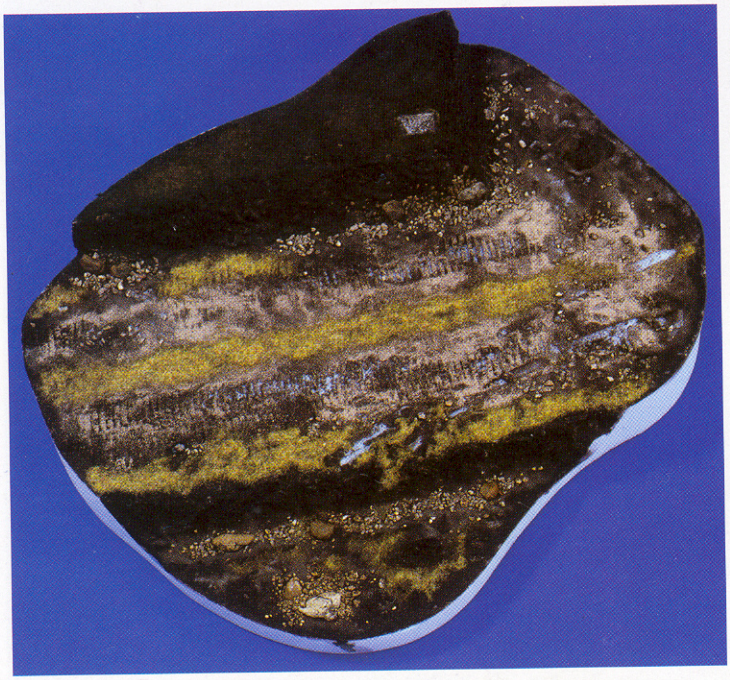
Battle of the Bulge 1944 by VP studios

Tamiya Panther
Tamiya Schwimmwagen with VP update set # 1419
Italeri Jeep
All accessories and figures VP

The Battle of the Bulge was the last blitzkrieg conceived by Hitler to defeat the Allies and secure the future of the Third Reich. Against the advice of most of his top-ranking generals, his plan was a massive German counterattack, sending a powerful thrust of panzer divisions and infantry bursting through Belgium's Ardenne Forest to cut the Allied forces in two at their weakest point on the front line. Initially, the Germans were shockingly successful, breaking-up the front line and generally creating havoc and causing mass confusion among the combatants. However, the weather became bitterly cold, and the Allied forces got their act together. With Montgomery's forces in the north, and Bradley's in the south, both Armies squeezed hard until the Germans withdrew. After a month of desperate fighting in bitter cold weather, the front line in the Ardennes had been re-established to about where it had been when the massive offensive began on December 16, 1944.



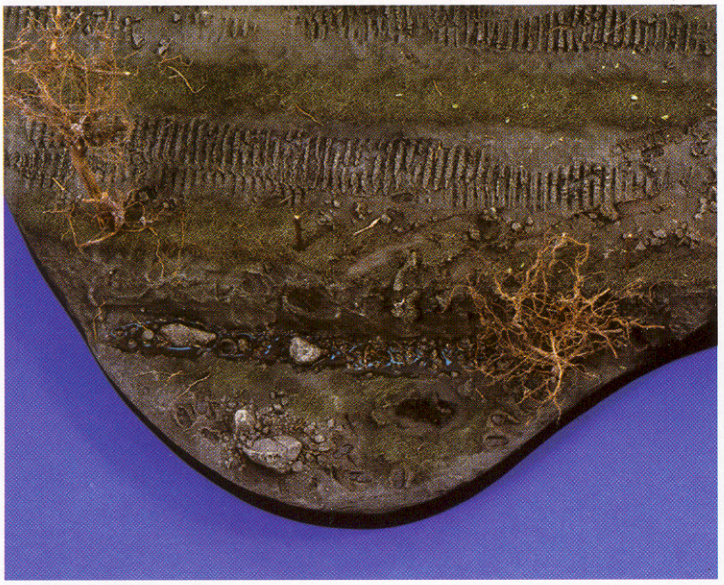
The basic diorama layout- a country roadside in the Ardennes. After determining the proper dimensions and elevations, the base was cut out of a piece of polystyrene foam with a jigsaw, then sanded smooth with fine grit sandpaper. The ditch in the front was cut with a hot wire and shaped with a soldering iron.
Initially a Tiger tank was considered for the main vehicle on the scene, only to be later replaced with a Panther tank which was of a darker color, thus blending better with the coloring of the groundwork.



The groundwork is made of built-up porion grout-cement premixed with black, red brown, and sand acrylics. This mixture was applied with a butter knife and textured with a large brush. Rocks, pebbles, sand, and static grass were applied and wetted with plenty of water with a paintbrush. After drying, the completed landscape was painted with the same mixture of acrylic paints. This photo shows the background elevation painted with this mixture. The base must be allowed to dry completely before drybrushing can begin.

The drybrushing palette : sand, light brown, and green are intermixed to create subtle blending colors. Drybrushing started with a slightly lighter color than the base color, and was gradually lightened to build contrast in a step-by-step manner.
(1.) Sand
(2.) Light brown
(3.) Sand
(4.) Cream

grass:
(1.) dark green
(2.) Grass green
(3.) Light green (green + yellow)



"Water" was poured into the roadside ditch using Envirotes, a clear, high gloss epoxy resin used to finish furniture. Seperate thin layers had to be cast to ensure proper curing, and care was taken not ot allow the resin to come into direct contact with the polyfoam base. Such contact would cause the foam to dissolve, resulting in a ruined base.

The completed base after drybrushing, ready to receive the trees and foliage. The tank tracks, footsteps, and other impressions for the figures, vehicles, and accessories were made while the groundwork was still wet, and show-up very well after drybrushing. Since the scene takes place during winter, the earth and foliage colors were kept dark to create the atmosphere of a dark, cloudy day.

The finished diorama base. Leafless trees and shrubs were selected in order to enhance the winter effect. These were trimmed to shape, and after punching holes with a pin, permanently fixed into place with white glue. Some little details came up while working, such as a telephone pole, a barb-wire fence, and sprinkling some dry leaves (cilantro) around the trees. Noteworthy is the roadside shrine, a common sight in any European countryside.

An overall view of a countryside that has suddenly become very busy. The ditched jeep has been abandoned by its crew, stowage strewn about. This has gained the attention of advancing German infantry, some of whom are busy rummaging through it for useful items like C-rations, and especially Lucky Strikes! The Panther has come to a halt, while the officers and crew of the Schwimmwagen discuss some difficult decision. At the right a soldier places mines at the entrance of a side road, while his comrade has other pressing needs.

Behind the trees, this soldier has taken advantage of the brief stop by taking care of rather urgent business! Also of note are the combinations of roots, shrubs, and dry leaves.

The high-ranking Panzer officer, dressed in a black leather uniform, is listening to the report of one of his scouts: "Doesn't look good ahead. The offensive is running into a stalemate." Its going to be a tough decision to make.

Pilots-eye view of the Panther. The Commander is on the radio while he checks his map. Note the usual stuff carried on such vehicles: chains, cables, blankets, jerrycans, food containers, and personal gear and weapons...all a must for a model used in a diorama.

Note the three distinct levels of this diorama: the ditch, the road, and the embankment.

The Tamiya Schwimmwagen is generously detailed with VP update #1419 and other accessories from VP. Two dismounted tankers are watching the "conference" and patiently awaiting further instructions. Note the dirt and ground debris clinging to the bow and fenders of the tank, which was achieved by mixing fine sand, white glue, and static grass, applied with a brush and drybrushed after drying.

Photographed with the proper background, this diorama illustrates perfectly the dreary atmosphere of this campaign: cold, wet, and exhausted German soldiers in a mix of various uniforms.

Close-up of the ditched jeep with a variety of stowage: blankets, bags, packs, weapons, and C-rations. Note the bazooka strapped to the folded windscreen and the opened C-ration box revealing it's contents.

THE RAILROAD CROSSING
an instant diorama
by VP Studios

You would never know that this instant diorama contains only three pieces! Imagination and practice can get you where you want to go.

The "railroad crossing" (VP 1477) is the fifth entry in the instant diorama series offered by Verlinden Productions, and it is the biggest one yet. Measuring 9 by 12 inches (228 x 311 mm), it is big enough to hold a tank and a few other things. The whole diorama is only three resin pieces– the base and two ruined building parts. Clean up and assembly takes about 10 minutes, then you are ready to tackle the painting job.

The kit represents a town or village street where it crosses a railroad track. It can be used for any country in Europe during or after WWII.

The infantry figures are all VP (1336, 1358, 1368) painted with Humbrol enamels, and oils for the flesh. Also note the wrought iron furniture (VP 724) next to the building. Use your own imagination with this scene. It has dozens of possibilities.

A diorama like this can be viewed from 360 degrees. Attention must thus be paid to all parts of the scene. Remnants of window frames can be made from plastic or wood. It is an easy detail.

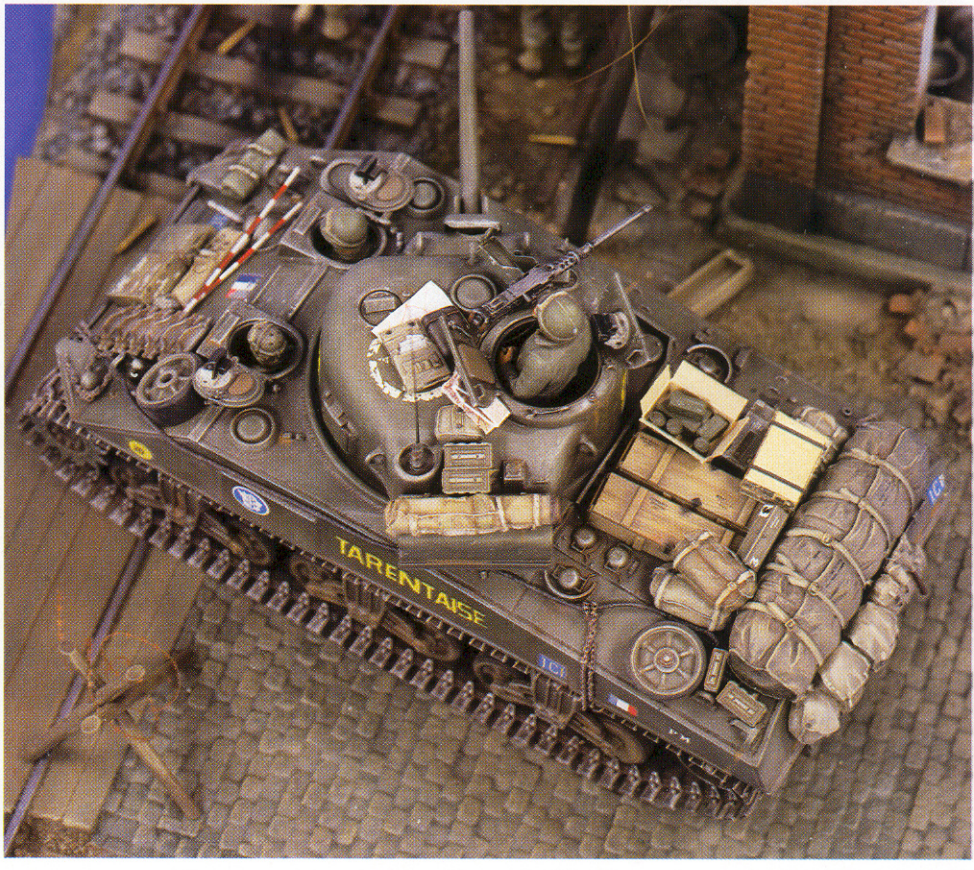
An overview of the action. Note the 75mm shell casings thrown out of the tank. An officer is on the horn getting instructions or calling for fire support.

The scene shows a U.S. infantry squad, supported by a Sherman from the Free French Forces somewhere between Normandy and Paris.

Note the remnants of a roadblock, lower right. The telephone pole is from Italeri, detailed with fine wire.

See the left behind remains of a German machine gun nest, including an MG 34 and some gear. The spent cartridge cases near the MG 34 are stretched sprue painted brass and cut to small lengths.

The diorama gets another dimension and a sense of realism when photographed against a real background.



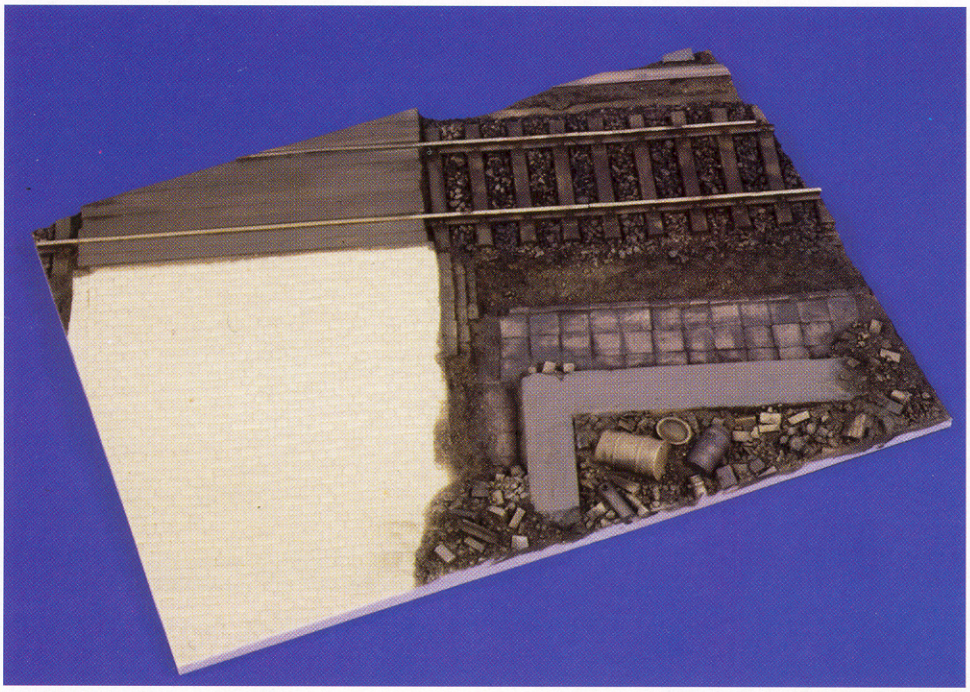
The Tamiya M4A3 Sherman is combined with VP M4A2 Hull (#333), VP turret (# 334) and Sherman detail sets (VP 204, 263, 341, 372). It was painted and weathered using wash and drybrush techniques described previously. (See "Painting and Weathering Military Vehicles Vol. 1," VP 1486). Stowage comes from various other VP accessory sets.

A bird's-eye view of the Free French Sherman showing the stowage: tent, bedrolls, 75mm ammo cases, .50 cal. and 30 cal. ammo boxes, C-rations, maps, binocular and map case – all VP accessories. The crew are VP 134 U.S. Tank Crew WWII.

Top left :
The remains of the building are cleaned and assembled. The bricks receive a base coat with a wash of Humbrol Matt 60, plus Matt 160, plus Matt 66. The natural stone portions around the foundation, window ledges and between floors receive a base coat of Matt 67 Tank Gray.

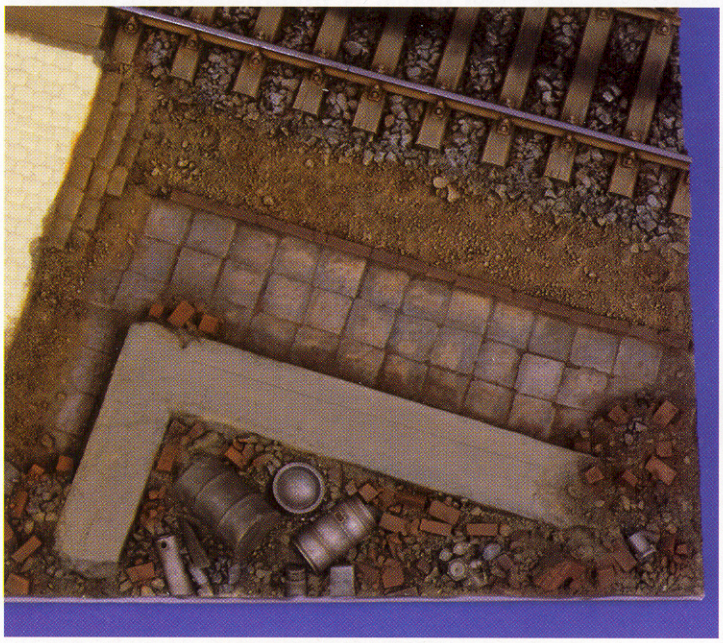
Top Right :
The bricks are drybrushed with a mixture of Matt 60 Scarlet and Matt 160 German Camouflage Red-Brown.. The natural stone portions are drybrushed Matt 72 Khaki Drill. The finishing touch is applied with gray, brown and dark orange pastel chalks.

Right :
The interior walls of the building are supposed to be plaster, so the first step is to paint it with an undercoat of Humbrol Matt 28 Gray.
The interior walls are finished with dark brown, gray, and white pastel chalks. Note the dark battle damage and the masked area where a picture once hung. You can do additional detailing if desired.



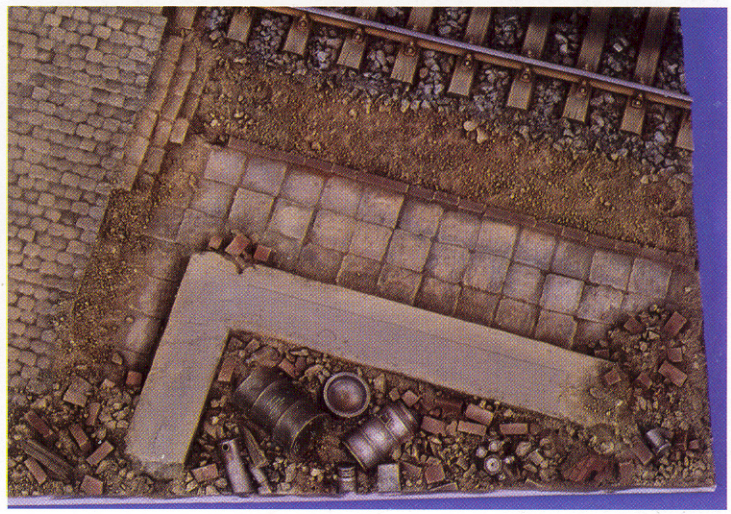
Left : The base itself, except for the cobblestone road section, is painted with various tones of dark brown and gray. Vary the mixes for different tones. Some combinations of colors used here: Matt 66 Olive Drab plus Matt 29 Earth; Matt 29 Earth plus Matt 67 Tank Gray. Paint small sections at a time and wipe off excess paint while it is still wet. This creates the first layer of depth. The effect can be seen on the sidewalk tiles.

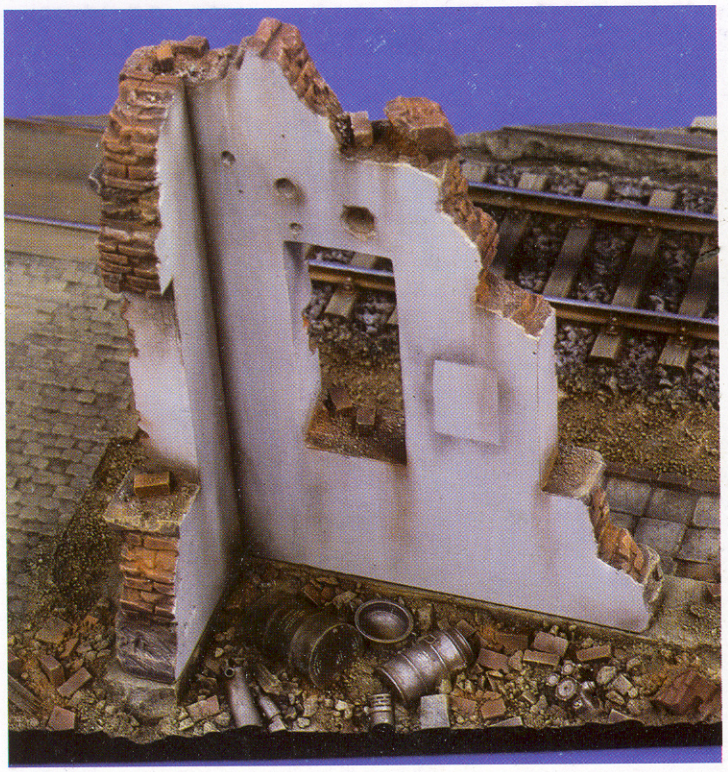
Below : The ground work next to the track received its drybrush runs, first with Matt 29 Earth, then Matt 29 plus Matt 93 Desert Yellow. The rubble and debris around the building are further painted with a base coat of Matt 160 Red Brown plus Matt Black for the bricks and rubble; and with Matt 66 Olive Drab plus Matt 67 Tank Gray for the oil drum and machine parts.



Above : The ground work is further treated with washes to enhance the illusion of depth: Matt 60 Scarlet plus Matt 29 Earth, and Raw Umber plus Burnt Sienna oils. It is important that you wait at least six hours between washes and drybrushing, or the colors will all run together. The mess around the building is further drybrushed with Matt 60 Scarlet plus Matt 29 Earth for bricks and brick rubble. Other debris gets Matt 29 Earth plus Matt 94 Sand. The sidewalk tiles received the first drybrush pass with Matt 72 Khaki Drill. Compare with the previous photo.

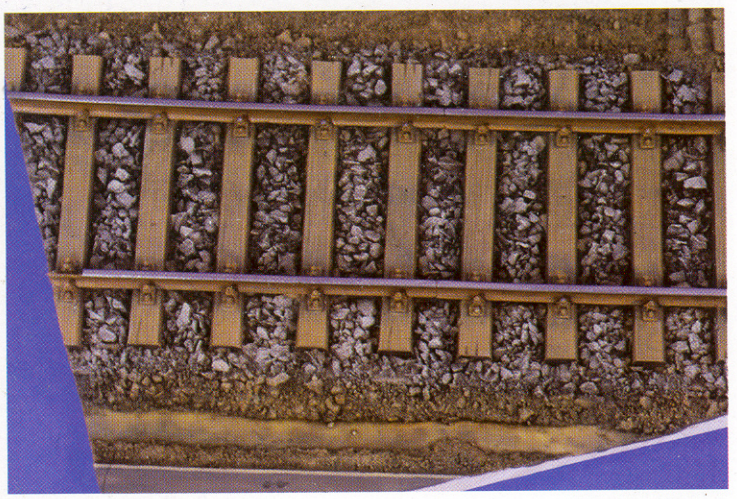
Right : Almost done. Everything gets a final drybrush run, First, Matt 72 Khaki Drill. Second, the same plus white, which leaves a dusty look. The container, oil drum and machine parts are drybrushed dirty grays, then metalized with a drybrushed mixture of Raw Umber and silver. Spots of Burnt Sienna and Matt 62 Leather finish it up.



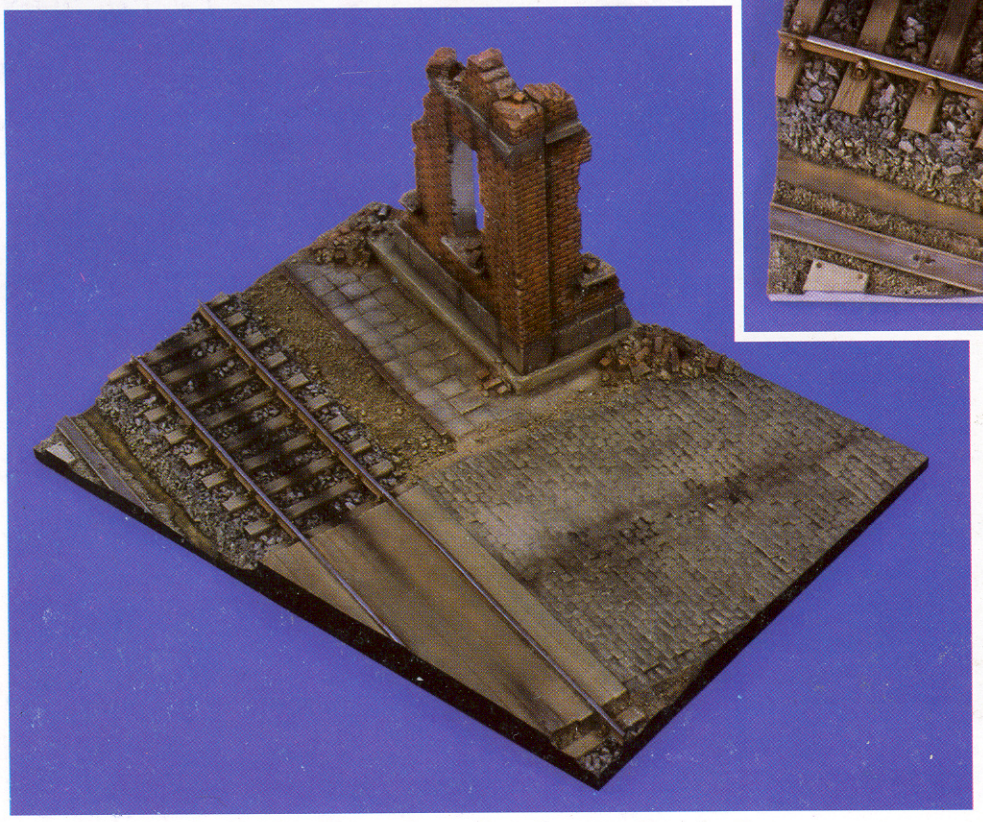


Right :
The finished railroad bed. Raw Umber washes are run around the track, creating more depth than there really is. Edges of the railroad ties are subtly drybrushed with a brownish white (Matt 29 plus white). Note the ditch running next to the track. The base color is thin Raw Umber plus Burnt Umber, covered with a layer of gloss varnish simulating dirty water. The linear structure in the immediate foreground is a concrete cable channel with steel covers.

The remains of the building glued in place. An overall finish of pastels is applied. Note the orange/red for brick dust.



Above : The railroad track is halfway finished. The railroad ties have been drybrushed with Matt 29 Earth, then a second time with Matt 29 lightened with Matt 93 Desert Yellow The gravel is drybrushed with Matt 64 Light Gray, then a second and third time with a little white added with each pass. The lower parts of each rail and mounting hardware are washed several times with Matt 62 Leather for a rusty effect. The top of the rail is painted Humbrol Polished Steel and rubbed with a soft cloth to a high gloss shine.

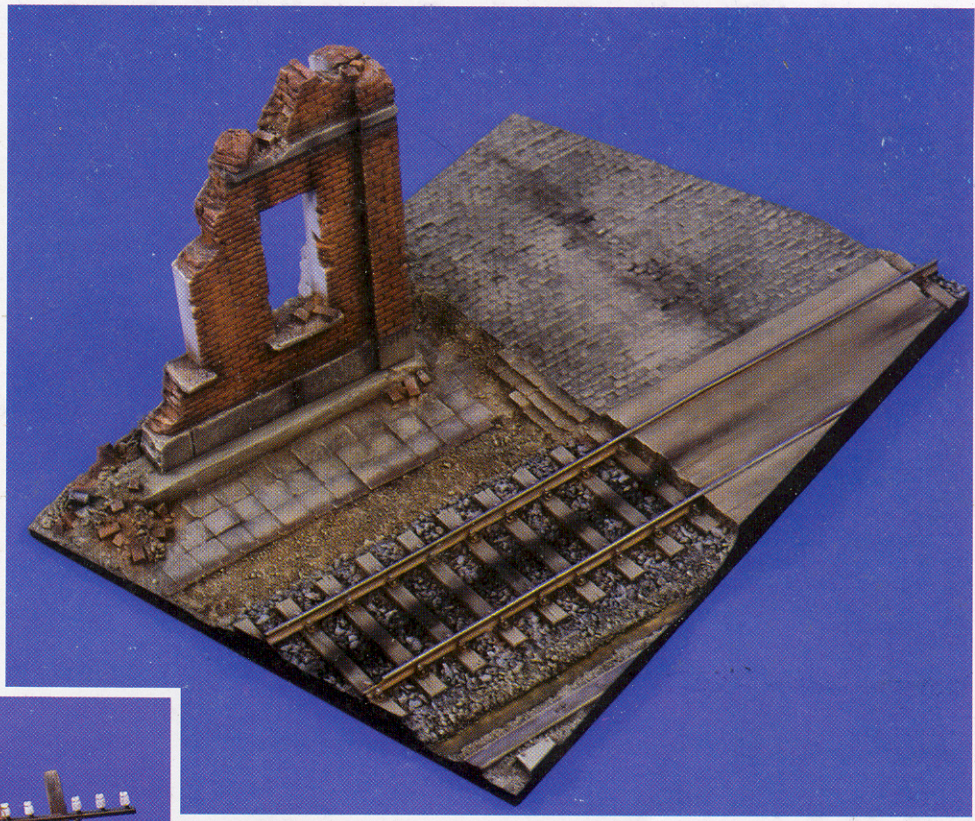


Left :
The completely finished base. The cobblestones are painted with Matt 66 Olive Drab, and the excess rubbed off, allowing the resin to show through slightly. After it is allowed to dry thoroughly, it is drybrushed with various gray and brown tones. Note the added touch of many years of dripped oil along the center of the railroad tracks and the center of the cobblestone street. This can be accomplished with drybrushed Raw Umber oil paint or with black and dark brown pastel chalk.

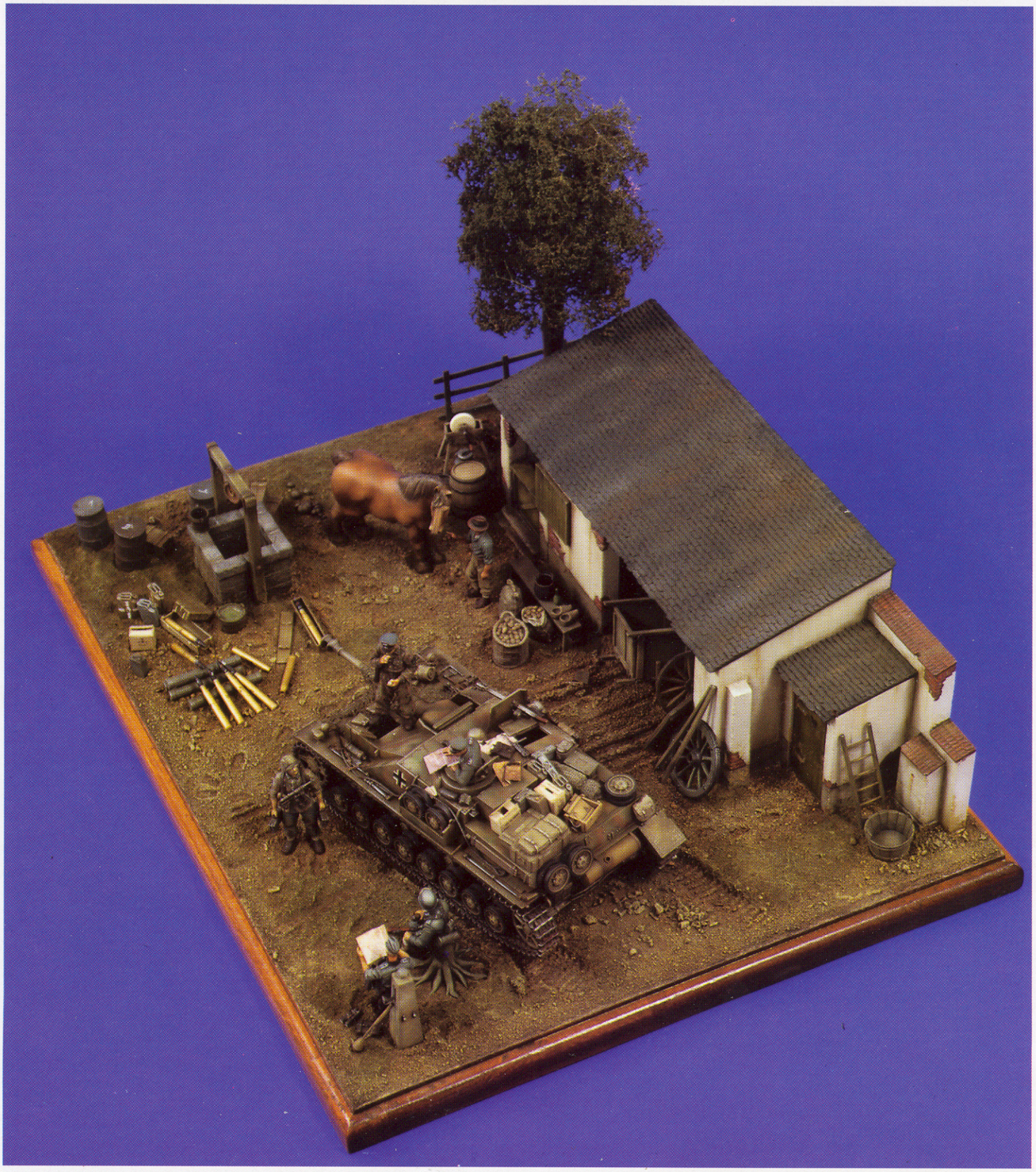
The overall effect is a messy and dirty corner, very weathered by nature and man. The process of wash, drybrush, wash again, drybrush again, then pastel chalk finish creates the effect of natural weathering that still remains very colorful when it is all done.

KITS and ACCESSORIES USED
Verlinden Productions
1477 Railroad Crossing
333 M4A2 Hull
334 M4 Turret w/ M34 Gun Mantlet
204 Sherman Update Kit
263 Sherman Super Detail Set
341 US Tank Periscopes WWII
372 .50 cal. Machine Guns
134 US Tank Crew WWII
1336 US MPs WWII
1358 US Infantry Officers WWII
1368 US Infantry ETO
230 Tentpacks and Bedrolls
1194 Cal..30 & Cal..50 Ammo Cases
724 Wrought Iron Bench, Table & Chairs
0091 Artillery and Tank Ammo Boxes
0231 US Infantry Field Gear

Tamiya M4A3



THE FARMYARD by VP Studios



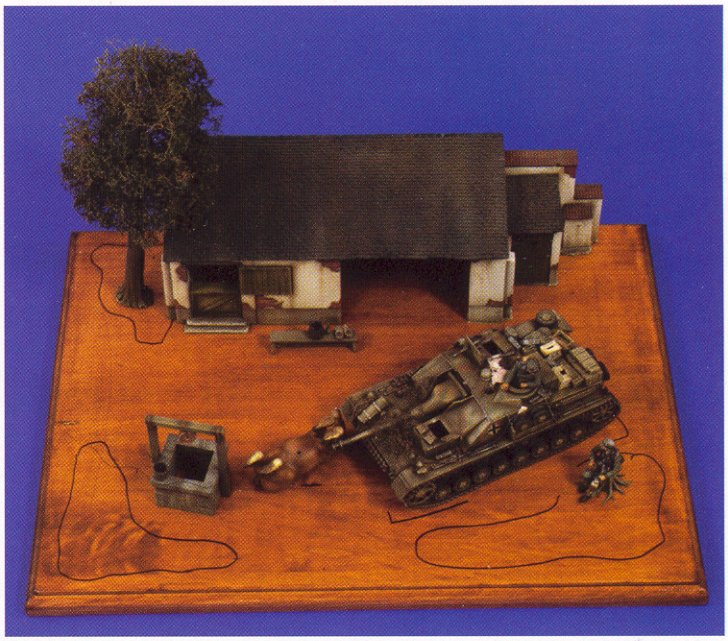
The finished diorama. The StuG has linked up with a few ground pounders in a Belgian farmyard. The farmer is trying to keep his huge Belgian draft horse calm. The crewmen and the infantry take a break and exchange information.

As the German Army tries to stay one terrain feature in front of the Allied armies, a Belgian farmer is only worried about surviving the war and getting his crops in, until he finds a Sturmgeschutz IV in his barn yard. Now, he must worry about how long the Germans will stay, how much damage they will do before they leave, and what his wife is going to say about the whole thing.

The backdrop for this diorama is the farmyard, VP1362, a typical small farm building in southern Belgium.

The Sturmgeschutz IV is the Italeri kit, which has been around a long time, but is still a good kit. The StuG IV was similar in appearance to the StuG III, but had a distinctive box over the drivers compartment. From late 1943 until March 1945, 1108 Sturmgeschutz were converted from Panzer IV chassis.

Its main armament was the 75mm StuK40 L/48 gun. Used in both antitank and infantry support roles, the Sturmgeschutz were issued to independent StuG brigades of artillery and assault gun units, Panzerjaeger units, and tank battalions of infantry and Panzer divisions.



The basic layout is shown. After experimenting with the positions of various components, the final composition is marked on the wood base. Areas that will receive higher ground work are also marked.

After attaching the finished farm building to the base, the basic ground work is built up with Porion plaster or other ground material. Fine gravel, sand and static grass are carefully sprinkled over the wet ground work. Diluted white glue helps to hold all in place. Any footprints, wheel ruts or track marks are pressed into the ground work while it is still soft. When dry, the whole is painted in various earth colors of browns and greens, then drybrushed with lighter colors.

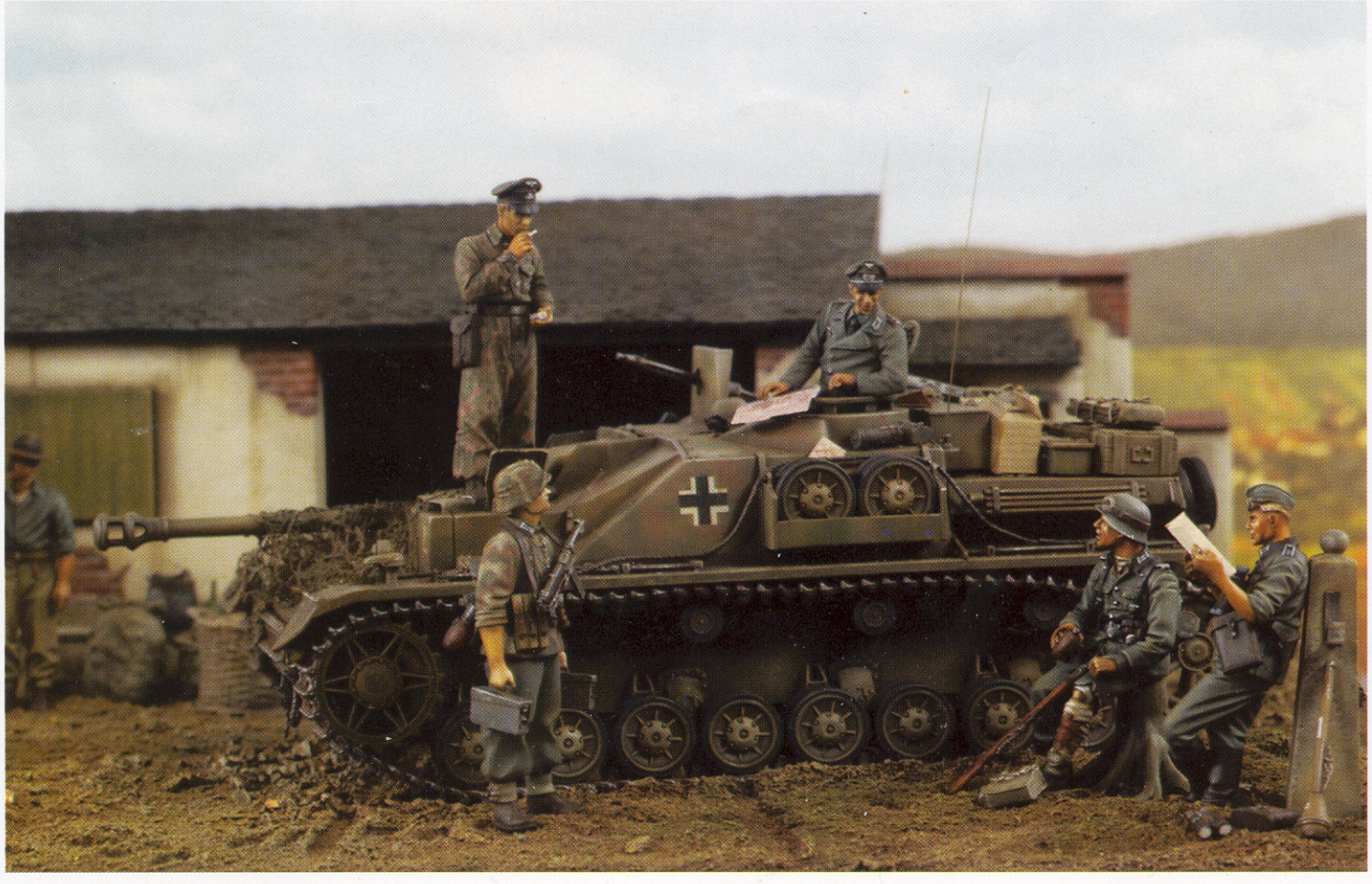
This is the painted ground work. The different shades of colors are apparent. The completely dry ground work was painted with an acrylic dark earth mixture and allowed to dry for 24 hours. Then, it was drybrushed with various earth and green acrylics. This really brings out the highlights, like the footprints and the track marks.

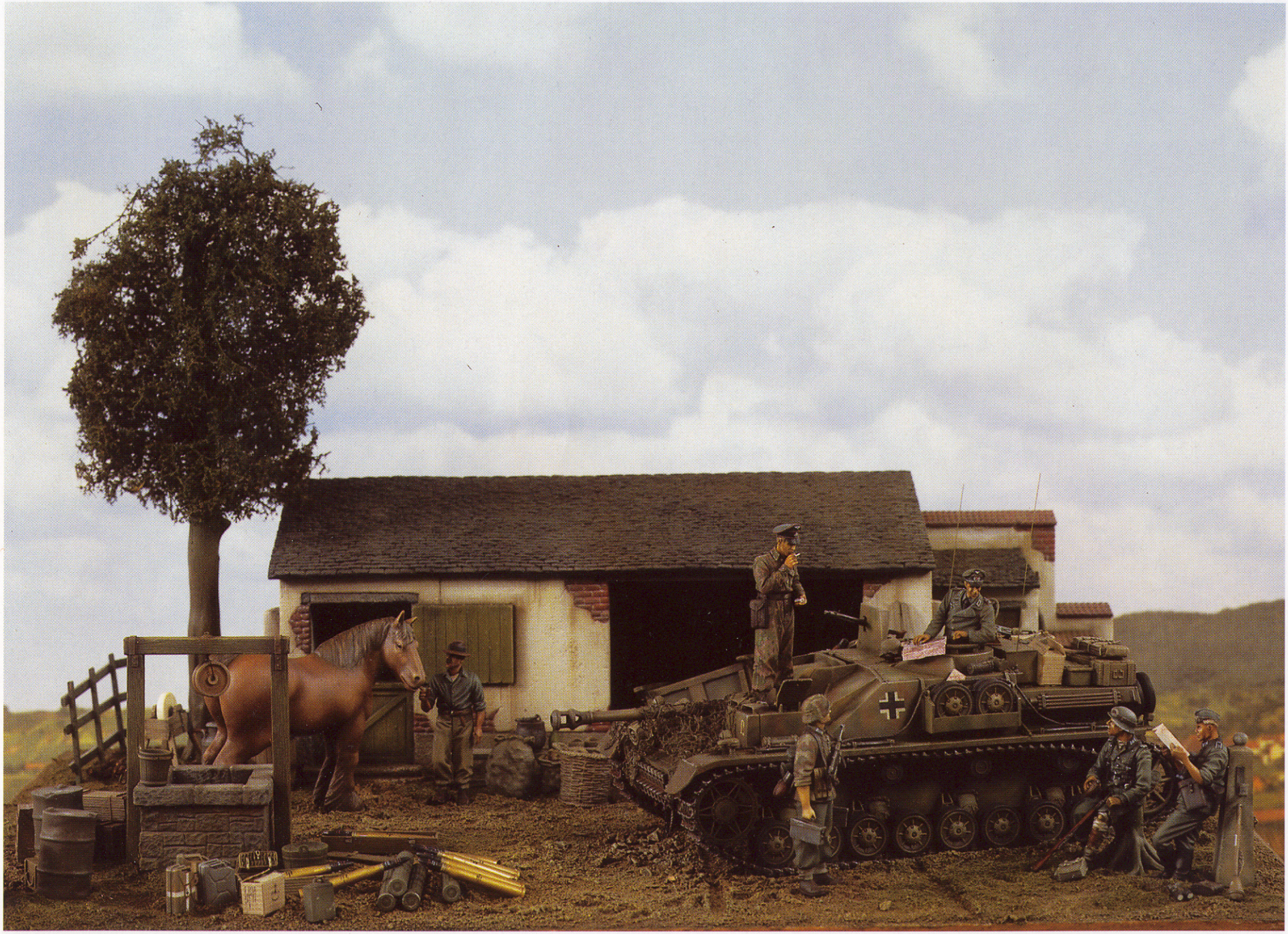
Perhaps the horse was startled at seeing the German vehicle, or he was very relaxed after a hard day's work. Note the stuff behind the horse, made with epoxy putty. Perhaps he was also just rendering an opinion.

The StuG carries all the gear that any self respecting StuG crew would not be caught without: storage boxes for personal gear, extra ammo, gas, bedrolls and tarps to keep everything dry on those not-so-sunny Belgian days. Because they had to move on a moment's notice, they carried everything with them.

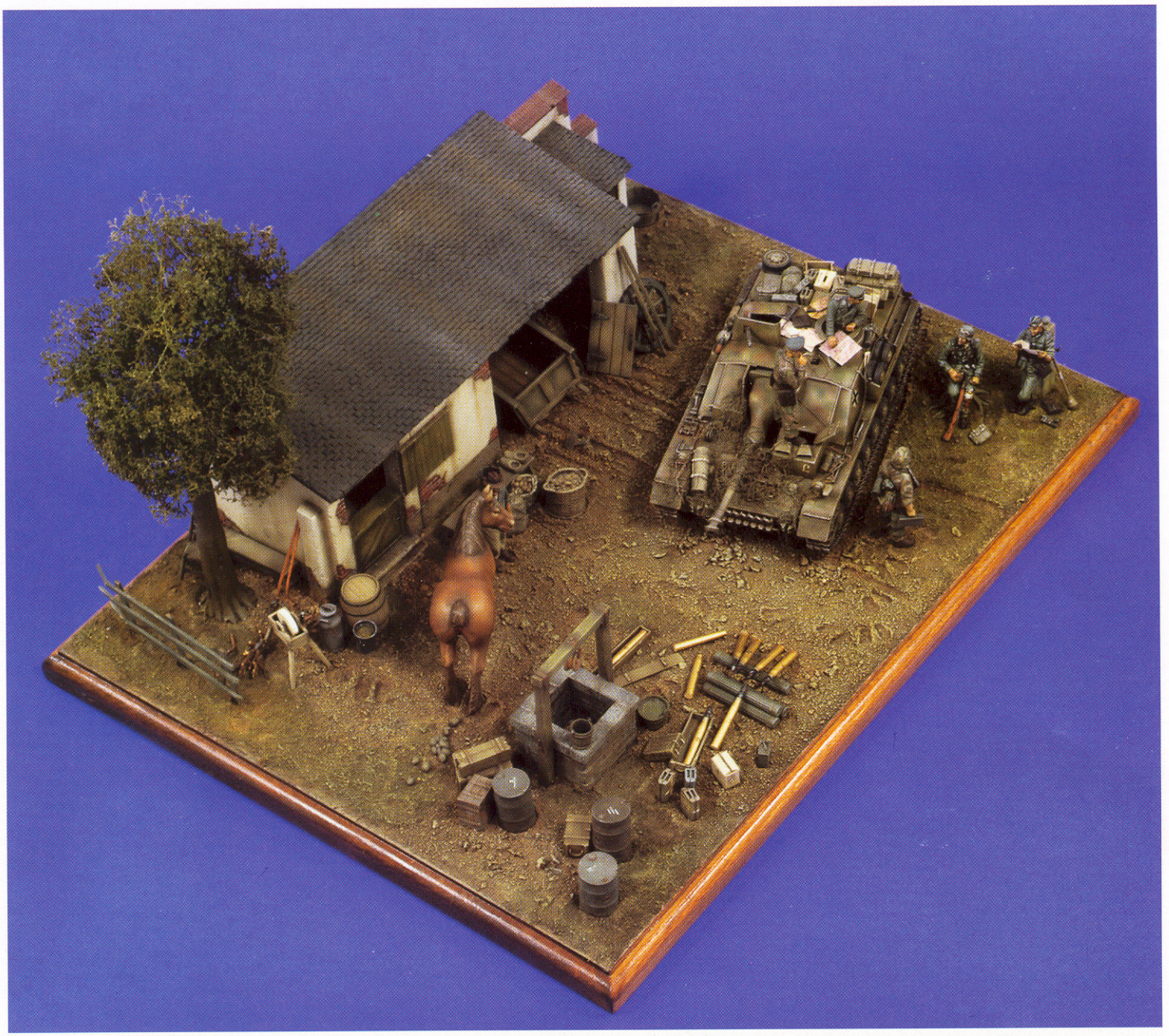
A good view of the stowage. Small details can make or break a model and the diorama. The crew would want maps, map case, and small arms close to the hatches so they could grab them in a hurry.

Another German unit must have recently visited the same yard. They left behind ammunition and fuel containers. No doubt, the farmer will find use for most of it, if he gets the chance.





Filmed against a background, this diorama comes to life even more. Every diorama should tell some story: like this contrast between soldiers involved in the grim reality of war and the peaceful, routine activities of a simple farmer. The farmer and his horse are doing their best to act normal and ignore the hated Germans who are tearing up their farmyard.



This overall view emphasizes why balance is important in diorama composition. The barn serves as a background, and empty areas are filled with the well, figures, farm equipment and military equipment. The tree adds height to the diorama as well as filling a corner.

ITEMS USED

Italeri
StuG IV
Jerry Cans

Verlinden Productions
1108 Oil Barrels
208 Military Provisions
569 German Tool and Ammo Boxes
1082 Farmerís Cart
1224 Farmer with Horse
1101 & 1102 88mm Ammo
82 Tank Crew Gear
1362 The Farmyard

Verlinden Productions Figures
1014 Cigarette Break
936 Panzer Grenadier MG Squad
978 German StuG Crew
1349 Wounded German
1365 Checking the Map

Historex
Farm Accessories

A view of the business end of the StuG. Note the camouflage net draped over the gun tube and the front of the vehicle. The crew can quickly attached local vegetation to it to help break up the Stug's silhouette and provide concealment. The ground texture, brought out by dark washes and lighter drybrushing is clearly evident.

Hamburger Hill Vietnam, May 1969 a 1:35th scale Diorama

By Young Jin Won

During May, 1969, three infantry battalions of the 101st Airborne division took terrible losses in the A Shau Valley during the notorious assault of Hill 137- Ap Bia mountain, more commonly known as "Hamburger Hill". The A Shau valley is a strategically important area which connects Hue and Da Nang. This area had been defended by Special Forces advisors before two regiments of the NVA took it in 1966.

Figures:
I built, modified, and painted a total of 14 figures from VP, Jaguar, and Coree Productions. 9 of them were from VP: #s 399, 444, 480, 528, and 1430, which were modified for 8 figures. VP # 452 was built straight from the box. I modified Coree Productions' figures for the wounded soldier and the radio operator. A close-in fighting 101st Airborne trooper against a NVA soldier was modified from a Jaguar models figure. I had originally planned to build more NVA soldiers for this diorama, but due to the size of the base, I changed my mind. I used Humbrol paint for the figures' faces and hands. Medium green and Olive green Polly S acrylics were used as the base colors of the uniforms, and after drying, Humbrol and Model Master enamels were used for shading and highlighting.

Operation "Apache Snow" was a direct assault by ARVN units and U.S. Troops from the 101st Airborne Division into the A Shau Valley, a long held area of the NVA that was only a few miles from the border of Laos. The initial attacks were repulsed by the entrenched Viet Cong, and the action became a battle of attrition between the opposing infantry forces. The battle occurred only because the Viet Cong elected to stand their ground and fight where the terrain was to their advantage.
Once the U.S. committed large forces, the Viet Cong simply withdrew behind the nearby Laotian border. This was the toughest single battle of the Vietnam war. Through heavy rain and dense jungle, the soldiers of the 101st Airborne (the "Screaming Eagles") had driven the Viet Cong off of Ap Bia mountain, blowing bunkers with all kinds of infantry weapons, including grenade launchers and recoilless rifles. Due to heavy casualties on both sides, the battlefield for Ap Bia mountain was dyed with flesh and blood. That is the reason they call it "Hamburger Hill". U.S. forces left Ap Bia Mountain soon after the Viet Cong withdrew. To the American public, the rapid abandonment of such hard-won territory seemed to typify the uselessness of the war. This was the turning point with the American public concerning the Vietnam War.

Through direct contact, indirect fire support, and close air support, dense jungle became the stage for the toughest battle of the Vietnam War.

The Diorama Base:
The hill was made with 3.5 inch styrofoam, which was covered with epoxy putty. Before the epoxy putty hardened, the trees, rocks, and all of the figures, which were already built, modified, and painted, were pressed into the groundwork. I used to cover my diorama bases with celluclay and plaster. However, I have found weaknesses with these materials: plaster has a relatively short drying time, and celluclay shows a negative reaction with oil paints. Thus, I am now using relatively economic and flexible epoxy putty. After affixing the sand and trees, I airbrushed the base color, which was a mixture of 1 part each of Tamiya flat earth and red brown acrylics. I repeated this process with similar earth-tone mixtures. Once the base was completely dried, I drybrushed and washed using Windsor & Newton oils. Hand-picked dried branches from outdoors were also painted with oils.

The punji stake booby trap was built from balsa wood and pins. The palm fronds are from VP #58.

Empty cartridges near the bunker were made from thin plastic tubing. The NVA's firearms , such as the Kalashnikov's and RPG's, are from Dragon/DML.

Medic! The wounded soldiers are calling for a medic. The wounded soldier sitting on the ground is a modified Coree Productions figure, and the rest are modified VP.

Conclusion:
I read plenty of reference books and watched lots of video tapes while I was planning and researching this diorama. Personally, I like to model Vietnam War subjects as much as those of WWII. As a matter of fact, I have built several Vietnam War dioramas. The center piece of each of my dioramas is a figure. However, I learned that a diorama without any vehicles is much harder than one with them. Without support from military vehicles, it is not an easy task to tell a story employing 14 figures alone. Building this diorama was both a challenge and a learning experience.

Foto für die Heimat

by VP Studios

The base is cut from a piece of marine styrofoam with a jig saw, sanded, cleaned up, and painted with black acrylic paint. The ground work is built up with Porion or a similar product and then sand and small pebbles are added. The kit parts are firmly embedded in the ground work and attached directly to the base. While the ground work is still soft, the gun, ammo crates, barrels, figures and other accessories are gently pressed into it to make an impression.

The German 88mm gun proved its superiority early in the war as both an anti-aircraft and direct fire ground weapon. At the end of the war, it was still top of the list. The Flak 36/37 could fire 15-20 rounds per minute up to an effective ceiling of 26,259 feet. With muzzle velocities in excess of 2600 ft/sec, its could drill any Allied armor in existence with its armor-piercing ammo.
On the Eastern Front, where there were long fields of fire, it was particularly effective, whether in the cruciform configuration, or mounted in the turret of the Tiger tank.

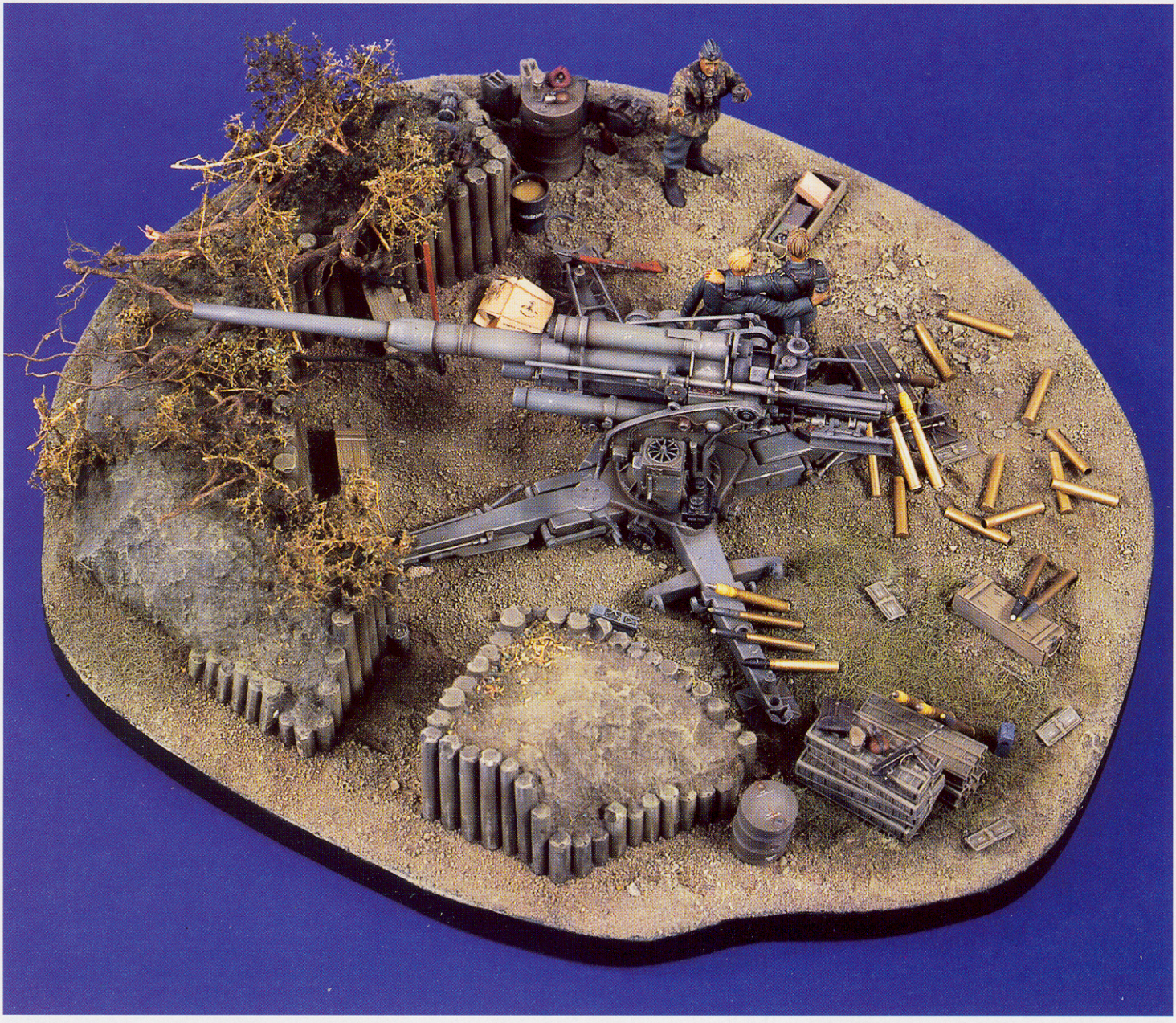
The Diorama
Once again, we call on the venerable Tamiya kit of the 88mm Flak 36/37, first introduced in the 1970s. It is still an excellent kit right out of the box. Here, we have combined it with the VP 1307, Gun Emplacement, and a couple of figures to produce a fairly simple diorama.

Two decorated crew members, (the Flak 36/37 had a nine-man crew), use the gun for a backdrop in a photo being taken by an official PK photographer.

ITEMS USED

Tamiya
Flak 36/37 88mm Gun

VP
1307 Gun Emplacement
1077 Kameraden
1101 88mm Shells
1204 German Food Supplies
1079 PK Photographer



Once the ground work is dry, the whole is painted with acrylic colors: a dark earth brown first, then successive passes with lighter shades of brown, green and yellow. Note that there are no empty spaces. More items could be added, but don't over do it.

The gun tells the story of recent action. Empty shell cases litter the ground, while fresh rounds are lined up ready for the next target. VP 1307 contains two ceramic pieces that can be arranged any way you want. They represent the old practice of driving logs into the ground to form strong defensive fighting positions.

The photographer poses the subjects, who are wearing their brand new Iron Crosses.

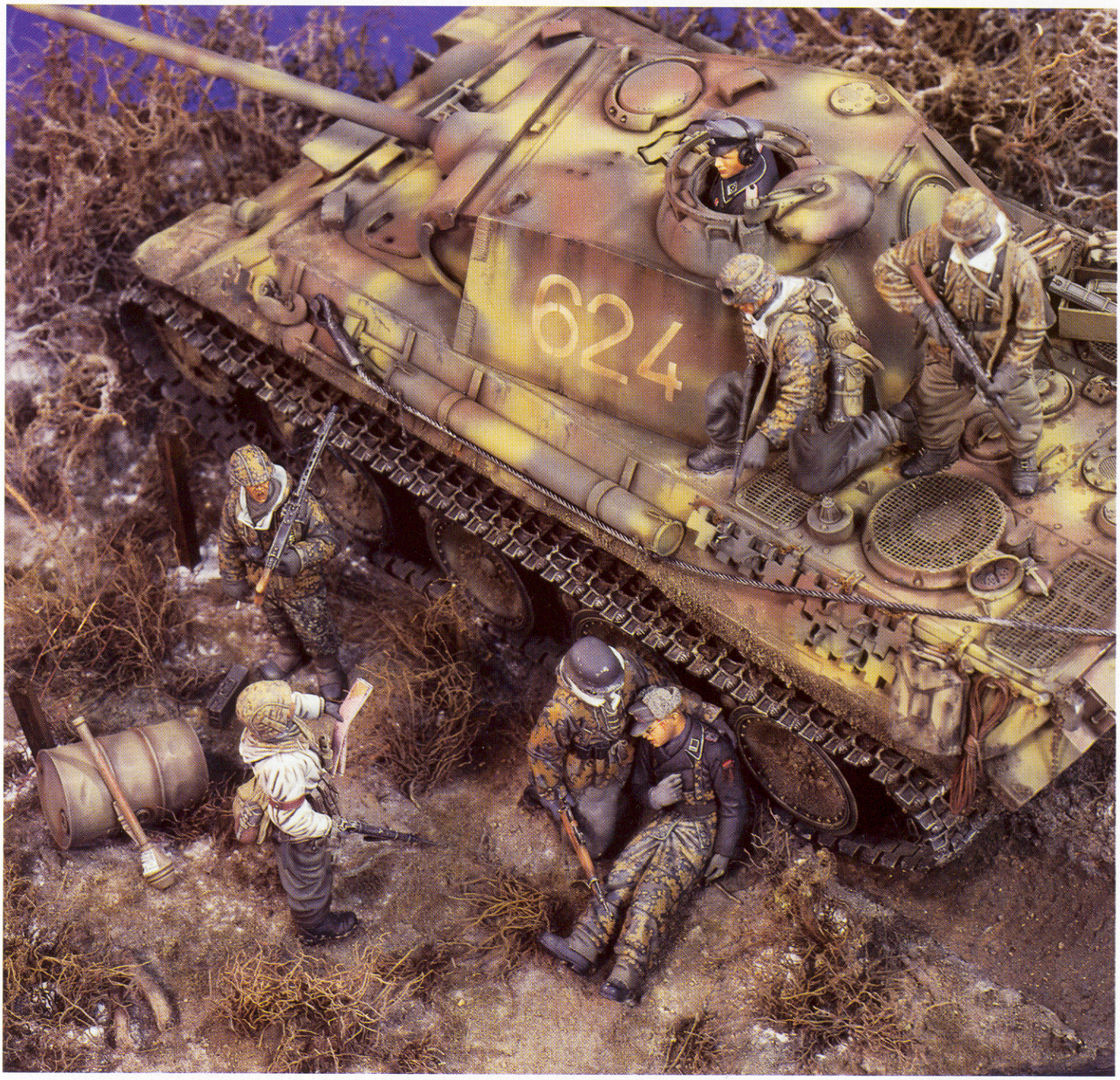
RETREAT FROM BUDAPEST

a 120mm (1:15th Scale) Diorama

by Greg Chilar

The Big Panther is a formidable model in 120mm scale. I built the Verlinden Productions kit (VP #0952) straight from the box, with the exception of drilling out all the teeth on the tracks. This is no small task, but the look is worth it. I reinforced the hull and turret with plastic sheet for added strength. The first step in the painting process was to spray the whole model with a light gray autobody primer. Though resin doesn't necessarily need priming, when you have a multimedia kit that contains various parts of resin, plastic, brash and copper, you want to give it all a common base for painting. I then sprayed a late war three-color scheme using a medium green base color, then patterns in tan and red-brown. Some mud around the running gear is added with a little Celluclay and fine sand. Weathering was accomplished with local washes of paint thinner, Raw Umber and Testor's Flat Black mixed together. I drybrushed the whole with Testor's Model Master Armor Sand. Of course, the final step was a treatment with finely-ground pastel chalks in earth tones.

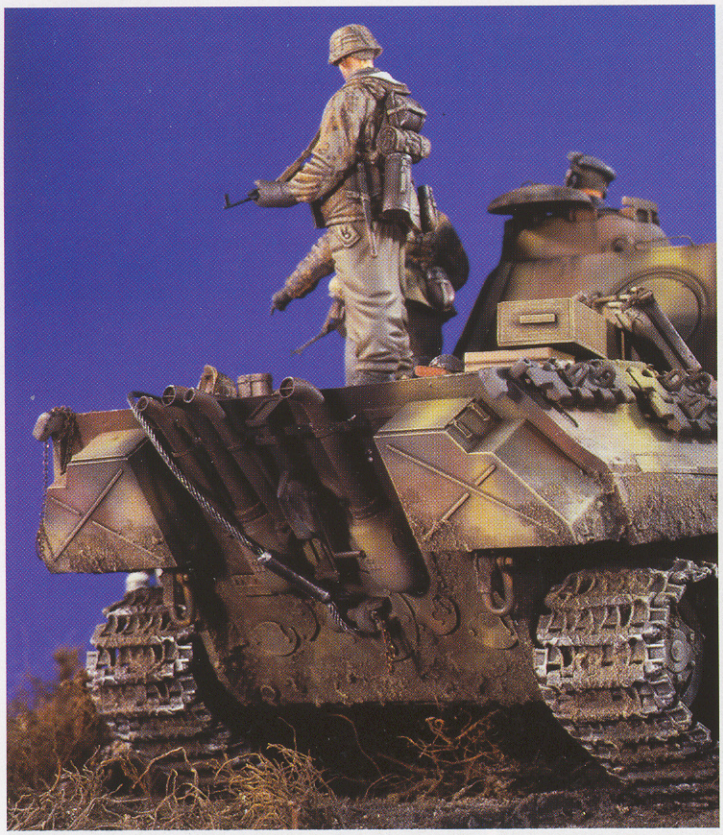
I had always wanted to build a 120mm Panther diorama mainly because I had never seen anyone do one before. I also am very interested in the last year of WWII because by then there was a wide variety of uniform combinations, equipment and vehicle paint schemes. This period lends itself to the most colorful presentation. This diorama, which takes place shortly after the failed attempt to capture the Hungarian capital, conveys an atmosphere of fear and confusion. A tank crew and a small squad of infantry pause momentarily to tend their wounded and try to sort out the confusion. For the Base I cut a 20 by 20-inch piece of 5/8-inch plywood and built up the ground contours with styrofoam and Celluclay. The bushes are plant roots from the garden pressed into the still wet ground work, along with rocks, logs and other debris. These must sit into the ground, not on top of the ground, or it will not look realistic. The tank and figures are also pressed into the ground work and removed. You must plan it all out in advance to get the best composition. Once everything is thoroughly dry – in about two or three days, I sprayed it with various shades of brown and tan from the Tamiya and Polly-S lines of paint. My notion was to have snow on the ground, but not so much as to obliterate the ground work. So, I gave it a light dusting of baking soda and fixed it to the base with Elmer's spray adhesive.



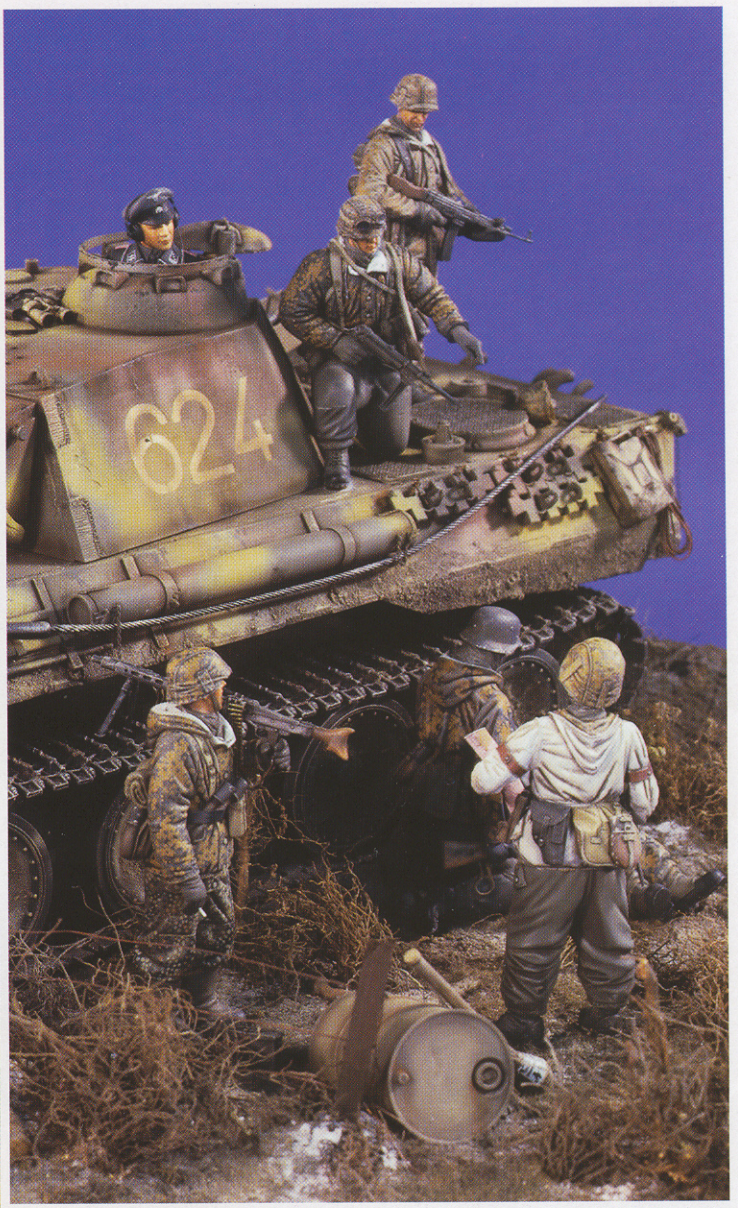
The focal point of the scene is the grenadier comforting the dying tank crewman. Two more on the ground and two on the back deck give a vertical dimension to the diorama. The figures are all VP 120mm resin figures. Some, particularly the sitting and kneeling figures, received some conversion. I chose a late-war SS-style camouflage smock pattern found in Windrow and Green's Waffen SS Camouflage Uniforms. I used Tamiya and Polly-S paints on all uniforms, and artist oils for the flesh.

A good perspective of the tracks and their effect on the ground.
The way the earth is pushed outward from the path of the tracks, and the dirt stuck to the tracks give the impression of great weight.
Details! Details!

The crew has found a natural fighting position offering a little concealment. The tank commander is still at his post. Note the area built up with styrofoam.



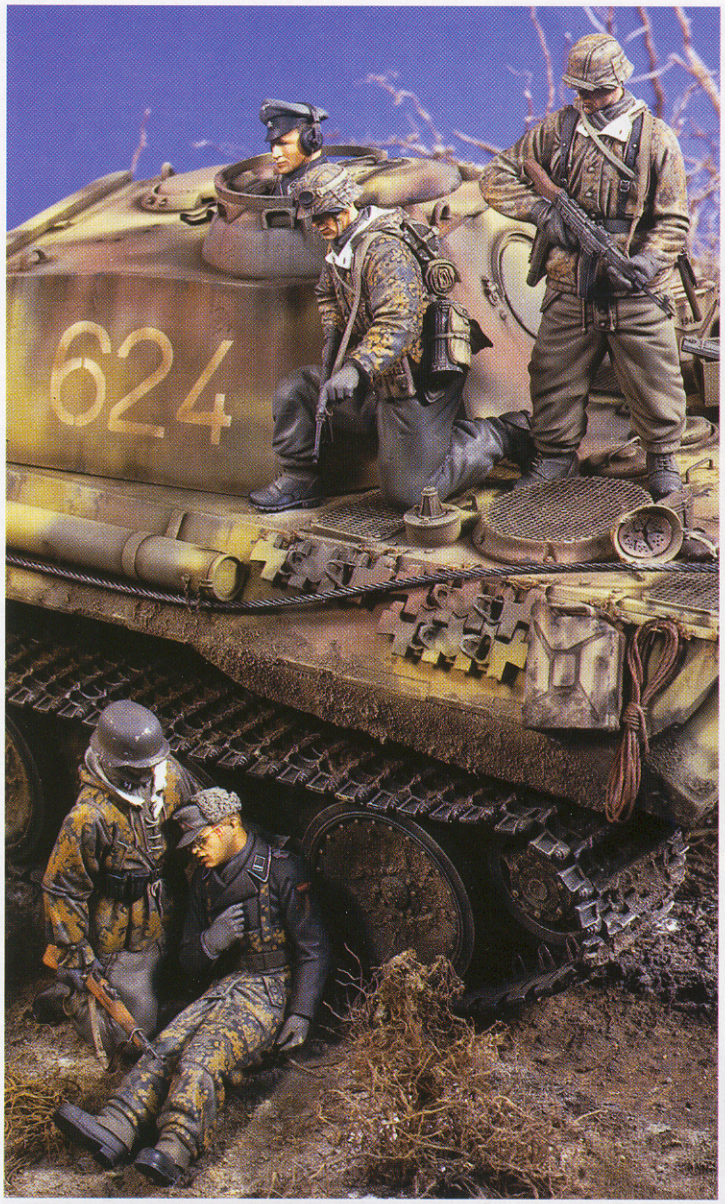
This tank could use a bath. Note the sooty, rusty appearance of the exhaust pipes.



The figures are positioned to interact with each other.
They are all involved in some way with the wounded crewman on the ground.

The light dusting of snow allows the ground to show through, while giving the impression of winter. The spare equipment on the back deck and the "Jerry" cans come from VP accessory sets.

The three-tone camouflage pattern is evident. The track marks though the mud must be made when applying the wet ground mix. Dark earth paint helps to highlight them.



One of the panzer grenadiers provides comfort to the severely wounded tank crewman, while comrades keep watch from the back deck. This shot provides a good view of the dirt sticking to the road wheels, track and lower parts of the hull – an effect created with Celluclay and sand washed and drybrushed as described above.

The late war period allows me to play with the mix of uniforms. Note the two different camouflage patterns on the machine gun figure on the left. The figures help set the relative size of the huge Panther.
The panzerfaust, fuel drum and other items are all from various VP accessory sets. The realistic ground work, foliage and composition would make this picture difficult to distinguish from a photo of the real things.

ITEMS USED
Verlinden Productions
952 Panther Ausf. A, 1/15 scale
400 German Officer Russia
(out of production)
443 Panzerjaeger Russian Front
1051 German Panzer Officer
(out of production)
1225 War Souvenir
(out of production)
806 Michael Wittman German Tank Ace
(out of production)
632 Fuel/Oil Barrel/Brazier
(out of production)
545 German Infantry Equipment Set

The Panther sits well down behind the natural foliage.

RETREAT FRO